

# FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

---

By HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE



GEORGE ELIOT  
From Etching by E. A. Fowle

## THE MENTOR DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS

SERIAL No. 84



### *MENTOR GRAVURES*

JANE AUSTEN  
GEORGE ELIOT  
CHARLOTTE BRONTË  
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING  
MRS. GASKELL  
JEAN INGELOW

THE novel as we know it today is the product of a highly developed social life, of conditions which make the meeting of men and women on common ground normal and easy. It is preëminently the book of society: it deals almost entirely with men and women in social relations. There have been stories since the beginning of history; but the novel came late and belongs to an advanced civilization. Its appeal to women is obvious, and their early and continued success in fiction has revealed not only their knowledge of the material with which fiction deals,—character and manners,—but their insight and skill in the art of narration.

Miss Austen had a very narrow experience, and was a woman of village associations. She not only led a quiet life, but had a quiet mind. The people she drew were in many cases uninteresting, and many of them were distinctly dull, and yet “Pride and Prejudice” and “Sense and Sensibility,” are not only what we call “standard works,” but they are perennially interesting. In this age of a few real and many sham novels, “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,” Jane Austen’s stories have the stillness of remote country; but when the whole brood of stories of

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

the "gilt and red plush" order are forgotten people will be reading these quiet novels with delight.

### MARIA EDGEWORTH

There had been other women writers of fiction in the field before Miss Austen, and there were good novelists among her contemporaries. Maria Edgeworth was her elder by eight years, an Irish girl with an erratic and interesting father, who sometimes wrote complacent introductions to his daughter's novels as if he were conferring a great honor on the books and a great favor on their readers. Byron wittily characterized father and daughter when he said that she looked as if she could hardly write her own name, while he looked as if nothing else was worth writing. The commonplace looking girl had a very keen eye, a first-hand knowledge of men and things in Ireland, and a ready gift for characterization. "Castle Rackrent" and "The Absentee" are still read; but largely for historical reasons.

### JANE AUSTEN

Miss Austen's novels, on the other hand, are read for their intrinsic interest. In character, conditions, and work she was the embodiment of simplicity and sincerity. The daughter of an English clergyman, of Oxford training, good breeding, and good looks, and of a bright, witty, and somewhat satirical mother, the future novelist was born in a village rectory, and had the great fortune to hear good talk from her earliest childhood. She had a quiet manner; but nothing escaped her keen eyes, and while she was still a girl she had an expert's knowledge of the dress, manners, talk, and ideas of the people in her world. It was a little world geographically; but all the qualities, interests, and characteristics which make the great world interesting were present in it.

"Pride and Prejudice" was written before she was twenty-one. "Sense and Sensibility" and "Northanger Abbey" followed at intervals of a year. These stories were the fruits of a girl's leisure, and were written in delightful unconsciousness of their literary importance. The publishers of the time were not interested in these quiet tales, and Miss Austen was not eager for publicity for them or for herself.

In her twenty-sixth year she exchanged the life of a Hampshire village for the stir and gaiety of Bath, a brilliant little city



"When the Party entered"

(Copyright 1911 by George Allen.)

SCENE FROM JANE AUSTEN'S "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE"

Drawing by Hugh Thomson. Printed by permission of Macmillan Co.

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND



JANE AUSTEN  
After an original family portrait

frequented by people of fashion. During the years spent in the gay watering place Miss Austen's imagination was at work; but her pen was idle: her mind was lying fallow. In 1809, in a rustic cottage in the village of Chawton, the most productive years of her life were begun. She revised or rewrote the early stories, and added to them "Mansfield Park," "Emma," and "Persuasion"; writing at a little desk near a window in the sitting room. No writer of her distinction was ever freer from self-consciousness, and this is one secret of her success as an artist and of her popularity. When it was suggested to her to write a historical romance she said, "What shall I do with your strong, manly, vigorous sketches, full of variety and glow? How could I possibly join them on to the little bit [two inches wide] of ivory on which I work

with so fine a brush as produces little effect after much labor?" The ivory and the fine brush have given Miss Austen's stories a place by themselves in English fiction. "The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like any now going," wrote Walter Scott; "but the exquisite touch which renders commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and sentiment is denied me."

Miss Austen began to publish in 1811, and her last novel, "Persuasion," appeared in 1818, the year after her death. At the end of a century, and after many changes of taste, her novels are safely lodged with the "classics," and are read by a host of people for their delineation of character, their quick and keen observation, their quiet humor, and the indefinable charm of gentle, refined vivacity of feeling and style which pervades them.

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Among novelists of the quiet life Charlotte Brontë appeared like a flaming spirit from another planet. The author of "Jane Eyre" would have been as tranquil as the author of "Persuasion" if physical conditions made us what we are: she too was a child in a rectory in the quiet British village of Haworth. But while the physical conditions of Charlotte

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

Brontë's youth were of the tranquilizing kind, her father had a stern temperament, she was motherless, and the house was so badly managed that the children were not properly fed. After three years' study in a local school the future novelist went to Brussels to study French, and the two years she spent there furnished the material for "Villette." On her return home she became a governess, and learned some of the things about that occupation which appear in "Jane Eyre."

The three sisters shared the intensity of temperament which appears in their stories. They lived in a gloomy



CHARLOTTE BRONTË

house, among a people of strong, but unsympathetic, nature, and, unknown to one another, they all took refuge in writing prose or verse. Charlotte wrote "The Professor," but could not find a publisher; "Jane Eyre," written in a time of family disaster, appeared anonymously in 1847. It had an instantaneous and sensational success. It was denounced as immoral,—a stupid criticism,—but everybody read it, and everybody had a theory about its authorship. A majority of readers were sure it was the work of a man, although it is feminine to the very heart; the minority guessed that it might be the work of "an improper woman," although the splendid courage and unselfish nature of the noble woman who wrote it shines through

it. It was immature, extravagant, and melodramatic (Rochester is a woman's idea of a superman), but it was intensely dramatic, alive from beginning to end, and it was original. Charlotte Brontë had great energy of imagination, her emotions were intense, she had little knowledge of the world, and she was one of the children of tragedy; and "Jane Eyre" is the product of all these elements plus genius.

It was a meteor, and a meteor it remains; but it is still seen among the planets. It is overwrought, extravagant, and to that extent it lacks the simplicity of truth and of art; but it is alive, and life covers a multitude of sins of construction and style. The other stories—"The Professor," "Villette," "Shirley"—are all original; but none of them has the vitality of "Jane Eyre."

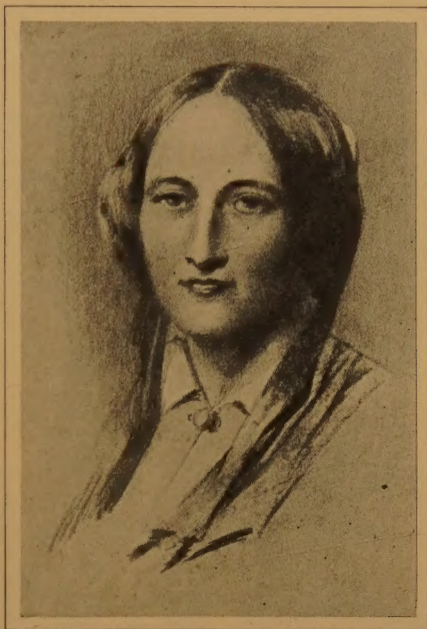
Its author showed her sanity and poise by the calmness with which

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

she bore her sudden popularity. She valued the friendships it brought her with Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, and others; but it did not intoxicate her. She went quietly on with her work; and at the end she had a few brief months of happy life with a husband whose love was full of intelligent tenderness.

### MRS. GASKELL

Mrs. Gaskell, who outlived Charlotte Brontë by ten years, and wrote her biography, was the daughter of a literary man, and became the wife of a clergyman, and had reached middle life before she began to write. Her first story, "Mary Barton," was a forerunner of the many later novels which deal with the relations of employees and employers, and had a great popularity, was much discussed, and was translated into half a dozen languages. Was it not Dickens who said of the poet Gray that he was walking down to posterity with one book under his arm? Mrs. Gaskell wrote a number of novels full of charming qualities; but she is known today chiefly by that delightful story of village life, "Cranford," a novel of such idyllic quality and gentle humor that it waited years for popular recognition, and then, fifteen or twenty years ago, suddenly caught the attention and won the hearts of American readers and appeared in many editions. It is likely to remain one of the classics of the quiet life.



MRS. GASKELL

From the favorite portrait printed by George Richmond in 1832



THE GRAVE OF MRS. GASKELL

She lies in the Brook Street Chapel graveyard (Knutsford, England). Her husband lies beside her under the stone cross

### GEORGE ELIOT

Marian (or Mary Ann) Evans, whom all the world came to know as George Eliot, was, like her predecessors, country born and bred; but her father had the management of large estates, and she enjoyed the opportunity of knowing people of all classes, from farm laborers to the great landowners. In later years she added to splendid vigor of mind the resources of wide reading and broad acquaintance with the

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

world of thought as well as of men; but her best work deals with rustic and village people, and is in many respects the most vital portraiture we have of provincial character.

She was a serious girl, with a vein of humor which runs like light through all her early stories. She went to various schools, and early began the study of French and German. The removal of the family to the neighborhood of Coventry brought her acquaintance with people of wide intellectual interests and in contact with the more radical thought and scholarship of the day, and led to the translation of Strauss' "Life of Jesus," and other German works of a religious or ethical character. These studies left a permanent impress on her mind; and, for purposes of fiction, that impress was not wholly fortunate. She came to the writing of novels through a severe study of the scientific philosophy of her

time; she wrote criticism of a semiscientific character, she traveled in Italy and Switzerland, she became the friend of Spencer, the Martineaus, Lewes, and other prominent people, and the vigor and force of her intellect were shown in a series of remarkable articles in the Westminster Review.

Her real work was, however, yet before her, and she was thirty-seven before her earliest venture in fiction, "The Sad

Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton," appeared, followed by "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," "Janet's Repentance," and "Scenes of Clerical Life." These stories showed firsthand observation, opulent imagination, broad and rich humor, and an intellectual force penetrating, but tempered by compassion and sympathy. Her knowledge of character was minute and psychological as well. She could paint a personality with wonderful accuracy, and at the same time could make clear the inward sources of action. In due time "Adam Bede," "The Mill on the Floss," and "Silas Marner" appeared. In all these stories George Eliot is the creative artist, to whom life is more precious than thought and vital portraiture



*H. Thomson*

"To see the Alderney"

SCENE FROM MRS. GASKELL'S "CRANFORD"

Drawing by Hugh Thomson. Printed by permission of the Macmillan Co.

more compelling than analysis. She was rich in what may be called the primary endowments of the artist,—passion for life, sympathy, humor, pathos, courage of insight. These were the first and finest products of her genius; she poured herself into them with lavish joy in self-expression.

Then her genius began to flag. "Middlemarch" has great breadth of character, and in the play of character upon character gives the reader a cross-section of society; but the joints begin to show, there is less spontaneity and more calculation in the work. "Romola" has great nobility of moral insight; but George Eliot said that the writing of it made her an old woman, and it gives one a sense of the heroic toil of art rather than of its freedom. And "Daniel Deronda," speaking frankly, is an academic exercise: only at long intervals does it come to life.



GRIFF HOUSE

Early home of George Eliot, from painting by W. J. Mozart

## ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

In point of intellectual quality the transition from George Eliot to Mrs. Browning is not abrupt, and in that power of emotion which stirs and lights the imagination Mrs. Browning must be ranked among the original forces in English literature. She too could write fiction: "Aurora Leigh" is a novel in verse. The world loves a lover, and has always been grateful to the Brownings for making an adventure of love and a romance of marriage. It loves the story of the semi-invalid lying on a couch in a darkened room in London, the coming of the young poet, the ardent wooing, the father's semi-insane opposition to marriage, the daughter's drive to the park to test her ability to walk, the elopement, and the years of common happiness and fame in the Casa Guidi, not far from the Pitti Palace, in Florence. It is a charming modern version of the story of the Prince who broke through the hedge of thorns and carried off the Princess; it is a fairy tale come true.

Elizabeth Barrett might have been both



GEORGE ELIOT

From a painting by D'Albert-Durade, made when the novelist was thirty years of age.

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

an invalid and a bluestocking if Browning had not rescued her. She read Homer in the Greek at eight, and dreamed of Agamemnon! At seventeen she published an "Essay on Mind" and translated "Prometheus." She was always a frail little woman, with a pale face and eyes bright with spiritual vitality; but for fifteen years she held on to life, and was intensely happy in her marriage and her work.

After Mrs. Browning's death and the passing of immediate interest in her personality, her fame began to wane as Browning's fame began to glow, until he has become one of the most influential and dominating English poets of the modern period. The reaction has gone too far and has obscured the genius of a woman whose lyrical inspiration, although intermittent, had much of the prophetic quality. Her genius was greater than her art, and she was a great poet only in moments of intense emotional or spiritual experience. Many of her lines are so awkward and prosaic that they seem to show complete lack of the power of self-criticism.

On the other hand, many of "The Sonnets from the Portuguese" reach the highest levels of poetic beauty. One is tempted to say that the sonnet beginning—

If thou love me, let it be for naught  
Except for love's sake only—

belongs with the very best of its kind. In this noble poem she rises far above the obscurities, mannerisms, impossible rimes, that mark her less impassioned work. There are noble passages in "Aurora Leigh," and in "The Casa Guidi Windows" the soul of freedom finds a voice as powerful and as appealing as its own; while "The Cry of the Children" and "Cowper's Grave" are full of deep and moving pathos.

Mrs. Browning had a great nobility of nature as well as of mind; she had a flowing



NO. 4 CHEYNE WALK, CHELSEA  
George Eliot's home in her later years



GEORGE ELIOT  
From an early photograph

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

imagination and the great gift of spontaneity; she had intellectual passion, and her whole being responded to the appeal of deep sorrows, great wrongs, and shining ideals.

"You are wrong, quite wrong," once wrote Browning,—*"she has genius: I am only a painstaking fellow."* He was right, she did have genius; and he had genius, but he was not painstaking. Neither was an artist save in the happiest hours: that was their common limitation.

### JEAN INGELOW

When Mrs. Browning died Jean Ingelow was well known in this country; she was forty-one, and had thirty-six years of life before her. Like her sisters among the novelists, she was born in quiet surroundings, and her childhood

was passed in an affectionate home with gardens and fields, and the ocean not far away. Many Americans have seen the tower of Boston Cathedral, locally called the "Stump." There is a famous choir school there, and there is the great music of the sea, which Tennyson said came in on the Lincolnshire coast more majestically than anywhere else in England.



MRS. BARTON AND FAMILY

From George Eliot's *"Scenes of Clerical Life."*  
Drawing by Hugh Thomson. Printed by permission of Macmillan Co.



GEORGE ELIOT

In the years of her maturity

But the little girl, who moved the stones in the path because she thought they must tire of lying in the same place, was to sing of things more familiar and intimate than the ocean. The title of her first book of verse, *"A Rhyming Chronicle of Incidents and Feelings,"* suggested the field of her interests; although *"High Tide on the Lincolnshire Coast"* showed that she was not indifferent to the spell and tragedy of the sea as it rushed into the humble life of the coast.

She loved children, the home, the common relations and experiences of

## FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

men, so full of sentiment and pathos to the tender-hearted and poetic. Few poems of the last generation found their way to more hearts than "Divided," and "The Songs of Seven": they touched deep springs of feeling, and they had a captivating, musical cadence. Jean Ingelow did not rise to greatness as did Mrs. Browning; she was not a priestess or a sibyl; she was a singer of near and dear things, but her voice was clear and sweet and full of deep feeling.

### DINAH MULOCK CRAIK

English rectories have been schools of sound English, taste for good literature, and knowledge of ordered and dignified life which form a distinctively English training. Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, whom readers of the last generation know as Miss Mulock, was one of

the products of this home culture. She too was born in a rectory; but her early life was neither tranquil nor happy. The unkindness of her father to her mother finally led her to open revolt, and she undertook the support of her mother and brothers by her writing. She had, fortunately, a gift of expression which was immediately serviceable, and her first attempt in the field of fiction was successful. This story, "The Ogilvies," appeared in 1849, and secured an early popularity. She had little invention in



MRS. BROWNING AND HER SON  
Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning, an  
only child, born in 1849



ELIZABETH BARRETT  
BROWNING



FLORENCE CASA GUIDI  
Where Mrs. Browning died

the making of plots; but she had sentiment, the dramatic instinct, and she was interesting. She published several novels which find few readers today; but in 1857 she touched the heart of her generation in a novel full of vigor and

# FAMOUS WOMEN WRITERS OF ENGLAND

tenderness. "John Halifax, Gentleman," appealed strongly to the growing democratic sentiment of England. The word "gentleman" has had a definite social meaning for generations in that country. John Halifax was a self-made man without social background or educational advantages; but he was a gentleman by instinct, a fine type of the self-respecting man who makes his place in the world by force of character, ability, and native refinement. Mrs. Craik wrote stories which she regarded more highly; but her readers were right in placing "John Halifax, Gentleman," on a higher plane than her other novels. She will be remembered chiefly as its author, and as the author of a tender poem of motherhood, "Philip, My King."



JEAN INGELow  
Engraved from a photograph

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

### JANE AUSTEN AND HER TIMES

\$2.75 By G. E. Mitton

### MEMOIR OF JANE AUSTEN

\$1.50 By J. E. Austen-Leigh

### LIFE OF JANE AUSTEN

\$1.00 or 40c. By G. Smith

### LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

\$1.00 or 40c. By A. Birrell

### LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

\$1.75 Mrs. Gaskell

### BRONTËS: LIFE AND LETTERS

2 vols., \$6.00 By C. K. Shorter

### NOTE ON CHARLOTTE BRONTË

\$2.25 By A. C. Swinburne

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË, GEORGE ELIOT, JANE AUSTEN

\$2.00 By H. H. Bonnell  
"Studies in Their Works."

### MRS. GASKELL

75c. By C. K. Shorter

### MRS. GASKELL: HAUNTS, HOMES AND STORIES

\$5.00 By E. A. Chadwick

### GEORGE ELIOT'S LIFE

As related in her letters and journals.

Arranged and edited by her husband, J. W. Cross  
3 vols., \$3.75

### LIFE OF GEORGE ELIOT

75c. By L. Stephen

### VICTORIAN AGE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

\$1.25 By Mrs. Margaret Oliphant

### GEORGE ELIOT: SCENES AND PEOPLE IN HER NOVELS

\$2.00 By C. S. Alcott

### CHAPTER ON GEORGE ELIOT

in "Victorian Prose Writers."

\$1.50 By W. C. Brownell

### ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING: ESSAY

40c. By E. C. Stedman

### LIFE OF ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

\$1.00 By J. H. Ingram

### STUDY OF ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

\$1.25 By L. Whiting

### WOMAN'S WORK IN ENGLISH FICTION

From the Restoration to the Mid-Victorian  
Period. \$1.25 By Clara H. Whitmore



# THE OPEN LETTER



Every mail brings messages of encouragement from members of The Mentor Association. The letters are coming so fast that it is not always possible to acknowledge them promptly. I hope our members will appreciate this. It is especially difficult for us to give an immediate answer where questions are asked that require research. The work is a joyous one for us, because the inquiries are always accompanied by an expression of enthusiastic appreciation of what The Mentor is doing. Every now and then a letter comes that is so friendly and fine that we want to let others know of it. Here is one:

★ ★ ★

"I want to tell you what a delight and help The Mentor has been to me. I have spent the past year in an oil field, fifteen miles from the nearest railroad point. Any culture or entertainment that we get must come from our reading and our phonograph music. None of our magazines have been more helpful than The Mentor, and I bought twenty-one selected back numbers for myself. I gave ten to a friend for Christmas. I gave another ten to my sister for a valentine, and now I am sending single copies out as Easter greetings. But please remember this: I never give away any of my own copies, as I cannot spare them. The music numbers have helped me so much—especially 'Makers of Modern Opera.' Now, won't you please, sometime, devote one number to Russian music and composers? And would you kindly tell me where I can find something about American composers; also English music history. I wish to get the pictures, 'Music and the Drama,' by John La Farge. Can I get them framed at any ordinary picture store? If not, where can I have the framing done?

"Thanking you in advance, I am

"Yours truly,

"Mrs. M—— W——.

"P. S. What would be some good pictures for a dining room?"

And along with this letter came another which has in it a request that is typical of the needs of thousands of our members. I have referred to the service of The Mentor in supplying programs for reading clubs and courses of reading. This has brought a response from reading clubs all over the country. It is evident that The Mentor has work to do—and mighty interesting work—in supplying information and assistance to the clubs. Here, too, we ask our members to be a little indulgent in the matter of time. The regular Mentor programs for reading clubs have been made up, and they can be supplied at once. Where a special course of reading and a special program for club work are required, we need some time in order to prepare the material satisfactorily. The requests for special programs usually call for special conditions, and it is our purpose to meet these conditions in each case.

★ ★ ★

And now for the letter. It comes from California, and I print it because it has in it an interesting personal note.

"I thank you for the material sent me. . . . I should like to have a sample program for a reading club, with outlines and plans. We have had a Neighborhood Reading Club, with a high-school teacher as reader, who interpreted for us some plays, such as 'Everywoman,' and so on—but she moved away, and we miss her help. Have you anything along this line?

"Sincerely yours,

"Mrs. P—— R——."

★ ★ ★

We have often been told that The Mentor fills a real felt want. Here is a case where it is literally true, and it gives us a very special sort of pleasure and satisfaction to try to fill the place left vacant by this worthy high-school teacher.

*W.D. Moffat*  
EDITOR



H. T.  
1844



R. DARCY AND SIR WILLIAM LUCAS," a graceful social scene from "Pride and Prejudice," is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Famous Women Writers of England."

## JANE AUSTEN

### Monograph Number One in The Mentor Reading Course

JANE AUSTEN was charming and lovable; and, although she had seen a great deal of society, was shy and often very grave. Her looks reveal how observant, critical, and humorous she was. "She retained to the end," say her latest biographers, "her freshness and humor, her sympathy with the young. 'We do not grow older, of course,' she says in one of her latest letters; and it is evident that this was the impression left with the rising generation of nephews and nieces from their intercourse with her."

One of her nieces described her as having a "figure tall and slight, but not drooping; well balanced, as was proved by her quick, firm step; her complexion of that rare sort which seems the particular property of light brunettes; a skin, not fair, but perfectly clear and healthy; the fine, naturally curling hair, neither light nor dark; the bright hazel eyes to match; and the rather small, but well shaped nose."

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1757, at Steventon in Hampshire, where her father, George Austen, was rector. She was the youngest of seven children. Her life was uneventful. The first sixteen years were spent at Steventon, and the next few at Bath, where her father died in 1805. Then the family moved to Southampton, and in 1809 to Chawton, near Alton, in Hampshire, where Jane lived until 1817. In May of that year, her health failing, she went to Winchester to be near a doctor of reputation. She died there on July 18, 1817, and was buried in Winchester Cathedral. She never married. The one romantic story of a lover who died is veiled in mystery. Her family relations were delightful, and she was particularly devoted to her nephews and nieces, and entered heartily into their youthful pleasures.

She began to write verses and skits at an early age for the amusement of the family. "Pride and Prejudice," written in 1796-97, did not find a publisher until

1813, two years after "Sense and Sensibility" (developed from an old story, "Eleanor and Marianne,") had appeared. "Northanger Abbey," written in 1798, was sold to a Bath bookseller for ten pounds. He feared to publish it, and was glad to sell it back, not knowing that Jane Austen was the author of the successful "Sense and Sensibility." "Mansfield Park" was published in 1814, "Emma" in 1816, and "Persuasion" in 1818 (posthumously). All of her books were published anonymously, although their authorship was an open secret to her friends.

"Her interest was in life's little perplexities of emotion and conduct," her gaze was steadily ironical. The most untoward event in any of her books is Louisa's fall from Cobb at Lyme Regis in "Persuasion"; the most abandoned, Maria's elopement with Crawford in "Mansfield Park." In pure ironical humor Miss Austen's only peer among novelists is George Meredith, and indeed "Emma" may be said to be her 'Egoist,' or the 'Egoist' his 'Emma.' But irony and fidelity to the fact alone would not have carried her down the ages. To these gifts she allied a perfect sense of dramatic progression and an admirable lucid and flowing prose style which makes her stories the easiest reading.

"Recognition came to Miss Austen slowly. It was not until quite recent times that to read her became a necessity of culture. But she is now firmly established as an English classic. She was always admired by the best intellects, such as Coleridge, Tennyson, Macaulay, Scott, Sydney Smith, Disraeli, and Archbishop Whately, the last of whom may be said to have been her discoverer. Macaulay, whose adoration of Miss Austen's genius was almost idolatrous, considered 'Mansfield Park' her greatest feat; but many critics give the palm to 'Emma.' Disraeli read 'Pride and Prejudice' seventeen times."



THE FIRST KISS.

ROMOLA AND TITO MELEMA



OMOLA AND TITO MELEMA," the two lovers of George Eliot's famous novel "Romola," are the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Famous Women Writers of England."

### GEORGE ELIOT

#### Monograph Number Two in The Mentor Reading Course

GEORGE ELIOT was more than a novelist: she was an intellectual force in her day. Mary Ann (or Marian) Evans chose the name "George Eliot" to conceal her identity not only because it was a man's name, but a "good mouth-filling one," she said. Her father, Robert Evans, was agent for the Arbury estate in Warwickshire; and here the future novelist spent her early years, receiving the education of the ordinary English girl in boarding schools, and the usual domestic training at home. She was a great reader, and early began to absorb knowledge. From her father (partly portrayed as Adam Bede and partly as Caleb Garth) she inherited a small income in 1849. Her novels brought her quite a fortune. She therefore never knew what it was to struggle.

George Eliot's first work was a translation of Strauss's "Life of Jesus." It was published in 1846; and, though scholarly, met with no popular success. In 1851, as assistant editor of the Westminster Review, she became acquainted with many authors, including the brilliant George Henry Lewes. Lewes' devotion to her was unflinching, and she returned it; but the penalty of their devotion was social isolation. It was largely due to his influence (he was a man of extraordinary versatility and culture) that her mind developed as it did. It was at Lewes' entreaty that she began to write fiction. "Amos Barton" was the result. Lewes sent it to Blackwood. It appeared in Blackwood's Magazine in 1857 under the name of "George Eliot." "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," "Janet's Repentance," and "Scenes of Clerical Life" belong to this period.

Mrs. Ritchie, the daughter of Thackeray, tells us that when she first read the "Scenes of Clerical Life" she pictured George Eliot "as grave and noble, with a melancholy, reserved manner, rather bold,—certainly a clergyman from Cambridge." Then she gives us her real impressions:

"I once had a talk with George Eliot. It was in winter-time, and the snow lying on the ground. She sat by the fire in a beautiful black satin gown, with a green-

shaded lamp on the table beside her, where I saw German books lying and pamphlets and ivory paper cutters. She was very quiet and noble, with two steady little eyes and a sweet voice. As I looked I felt her to be a friend, not exactly a personal friend, but a good and benevolent impulse."

"Adam Bede," published in 1859, achieved immediate success. It was followed by "The Mill on the Floss," in which incidents of her childhood are described with tenderness and pathos. Maggie and Tom Tulliver are indeed the thinly disguised Mary Ann and Isaac Evans. The early part of "The Mill on the Floss" is therefore autobiographical. Then came "Silas Marner" (1861), which some readers consider her best work.

Next came "Romola," written in 1862-1863, after two visits to Florence. She began it "a young woman, she finished it an old woman," so she said. "Romola," says John Oliver Hobbes, "owes its vitality not to the portrait of Savonarola, or of the heroine, or to its vigorous pictures of Florentine life in the fifteenth century, but to its superb presentment of the treacherous Tito Melema, who belongs not to any one period, but to every generation."

"Felix Holt," a political novel, somewhat harsh and rugged (1866) and "The Spanish Gypsy," a drama in blank verse (1868), followed. Then came "Middlemarch" (1872), a masterly social story dealing with English types of the upper and middle class. "Daniel Deronda" (1876) showed the same intellectual strength, but was not so popular.

The death of Lewes in 1878 put an end to her labors. She practically wrote no more: her artistic life was finished. She, however, corrected the proofs for "Theophrastus Such" (1879); edited Lewes' unfinished writings for the press; and founded a George Henry Lewes scholarship.

In May, 1880, George Eliot was married to J. W. Cross, whom she had met in Rome in 1869. They occupied a house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where the authoress died the following December 22, 1880.





AT THE LITTLE GATE," the scene of the decisive moment in Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre," is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Famous Women Writers of England."

## CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Monograph Number Three in The Mentor Reading Course

AS a child," writes Anne Thackeray Ritchie, "I can remember Charlotte Brontë talking to my father" (the novelist, W. M. Thackeray); "as a girl I heard of her from her friends and admirers. Some years after her death I visited the shrine to which hundreds of pilgrims have climbed in turn. We came from Keighley, toiling up the steep hill at some hour when the women were leaving their work at the mills, and the echo of their wooden clogs, striking upon the stones, followed us all the way. We reached Haworth on the hill-top, with its scattered cottages and distant wolds and the grim, stately church uprearing in the churchyard. We stopped at the doorway of the inn, of which we had read, and which Branwell Brontë frequented. The host was still alive who had known the Brontës, and he described how Branwell used to linger at the bar late into the night, and finally be sent hurrying home by a back door and a short cross-road that leads to the parsonage. We, too, followed the road, hoping to see the rooms in the little rectory where the great visions had been evoked for all the world to wonder at."

Charlotte Brontë was born at Thornton, near Bradford, Yorkshire, April 21, 1816. She was the daughter of Patrick Brontë, an Irishman, who began life as a handloom weaver, and at sixteen became a teacher and worked his way to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he changed his name from Brontë to Brontë. He became a curate. After a few years in various places he settled at Haworth, near Keighley, where he lived until his death in 1861. The six children dwelt in a dreary parsonage close to a damp churchyard. They were dominated by a tyrannical father who enforced the strictest discipline. He had a habit of working off his volcanic wrath by firing a pistol out of the door of his house, by burning up articles of dress, and by hacking the furniture. When the mother died a prim and severe aunt was called in to take charge of the unhappy household.

The Brontë girls found relief from their rough, unhealthy surroundings, bad food, and harsh treatment in literary

work, producing stories, verses, and essays in tiny booklets in the minutest handwriting. Charlotte was sent to boarding school at Roe Head, near Huddersfield, where she returned a few years later as teacher. Then she became a nursery governess, and finally managed to go to Brussels with Emily so as to learn French. Charlotte spent 1842 to 1844 at Madame Héger's school (described later in "Villette"); but Emily returned to Haworth.

In 1846 the three remaining sisters (the other having died) were at Haworth, whence they issued a volume of "Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell." It attracted no attention. The girls then tried to have a school; but no pupils came. Their lives of privation and anxiety were still further darkened by the habits of their brother, Patrick Branwell, a hopeless drunkard, who finally died in 1848. In the meantime the sisters had each written a novel,—Charlotte, "The Professor"; Emily, "Wuthering Heights"; and Anne, "Agnes Grey." "The Professor" was returned as being too short, whereupon Charlotte sent the manuscript of "Jane Eyre," which, published in 1847, made her famous.

All London was soon talking about it, and the authoress was invited by her publisher to make a visit there. Fate allowed her little sunlight; for Emily died in 1848, and Anne a few months later. Charlotte Brontë thus lost her brother and two sisters within the space of eight months. The desolate house at Haworth was rendered even darker by the approaching blindness of her unlovable father.

In 1854 she was married to Arthur Bell Nicholls, her father's curate; but little joy could come to such a house of tragedy and gloom as Haworth. In a year Charlotte died, on March 31, 1855. Her husband soon afterward published her first novel, "The Professor."

Charlotte Brontë's fame rests upon "Jane Eyre"; but "Shirley" (1849) and "Villette" (1853) show the same close reproduction of realities, the same photographic methods, and the same somber note.





URORA LEIGH," the heroine of Mrs. Browning's romantic and beautiful novel in verse, is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Famous Women Writers of England."

### ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Monograph Number Four in The Mentor Reading Course

ELIZABETH BARRETT, the eldest daughter of Edward Moulton, or Moulton-Barrett, as he called himself, was born in Durham, March 6, 1806. She spent her childhood in Herefordshire, at "Hope End," which she immortalized in her poems "The Lost Bower," "Hector in the Garden," and "The Deserted Garden." At an early age she displayed unusual precocity and studied Greek. She began to write for literary periodicals in 1825, and in 1833 published a translation of the Greek tragedy "Prometheus Bound" by Æschylus. In the meantime "Hope End" had been sold. Barrett took his family to Sidmouth, Devon, and three years later to London, where Miss Barrett attracted attention by the publication of "The Seraphim and Other Poems" in 1838.

The terrible sorrow of her brother Edward's death by drowning she voiced in "De Profundis." It told greatly upon her; for she was suffering from an injury to her spine and delicate lungs. Study was her solace as well as delight, and in 1844 she published a volume of "Poems" which contained "The Lay of the Brown Rosary," "The Rhyme of the Duchess May," "The Cry of the Children," and "Lady Geraldine's Courtship." The latter, which contains many wonderful lines, was written in twelve hours. This book was well received, and brought the invalid poetess letters from authors, among which was one from Robert Browning, which she said "threw me into ecstasies." The latter soon became a frequent visitor, and then an ideal courtship followed.

Miss Barrett hesitated to burden her lover with an invalid wife (she was said to be the most unselfish of women), and even once refused him "with all her will, but much against her heart." Persuaded at last, she wrote in one of her exquisite sonnets:

"I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange  
My near, sweet view of Heaven for  
earth with thee."

She recorded all her emotions in these rare "Sonnets from the Portuguese," named as if they were translations so as to veil her authorship. Browning came across them for the first time in Pisa in 1847. He resolved to publish them. "I could not," he said, "reserve to myself the finest sonnets written in any language since Shakespeare's." They are, in fact, as beautiful as they are artistic, the most exquisite love poetry written by a woman, and one of the highest expressions of feminine genius.

Her father's insane objection to his children's marrying forced the lovers to a secret marriage on September 12, 1846. They immediately left for the Continent, and settled in Florence in 1847. They were never separate from each other thereafter until death. Their home for many years was in the Casa Guidi, near the Pitti Palace. Mrs. Browning's poem "Casa Guidi Windows," published in 1851, shows her ardent sympathy with Italy in the political struggle then taking place. In 1849 her son Robert was born, a beautiful and talented child, now known as an artist and a poet.

In 1850 a second edition of the "Poems" of 1844 appeared, containing a new translation of the "Prometheus Bound," and in 1856 "Aurora Leigh," a semiautobiographical poem, or novel in verse. About 1860 her health began to fail, and on June 30, 1861, the end came. Robert Browning wrote to a friend, "Then came what my heart will keep till I see her again and longer—the most perfect expression of her love to me within my whole knowledge of her. Always smilingly, happily and with a face like a girl's, and in a few minutes she died in my arms, her head on my cheek." She was buried in Florence. In 1862 Browning published his wife's "Last Poems."

Mrs. Browning was slight in figure, had brilliant eyes and a face full of expression and refinement. She was extremely spiritual, fascinating in conversation, and scholarly without being pedantic.



*The March 21*



ETER AND HIS FATHER," two characters in Mrs. Gaskell's delightful village story "Cranford," are the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Famous Women Writers of England."

### MRS. GASKELL

Monograph Number Five in The Mentor Reading Course

CHEYNE WALK, Chelsea, associated with Carlyle, George Eliot, and other literary stars, was the birthplace of Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, the daughter of William Stevenson, formerly a Unitarian minister, but at this time keeper of the records in the treasury in London. As her mother died a few weeks after her birth, the little girl was sent to live with an aunt at Knutsford in Cheshire. The journey of this baby she afterward described in "Mary Barton." At fifteen she was sent to school at Stratford-on-Avon, and made occasional visits to her father in Chelsea, who had married again. She also visited London and Edinburgh, and in both cities her beauty attracted the attention of painters and sculptors. The latter also raved over her perfect hand.

In 1832, when she was twenty-two, she became the wife of the Rev. William Gaskell, a Unitarian minister of Manchester. The first ten years of her married life were passed uneventfully in Manchester. It was at her husband's advice, and to divert her thoughts from the sorrow caused by the death of their only son, that she began to write in 1844.

She published a novel, "Mary Barton," anonymously in 1848. It had immediate success, and the insight it gave into the habits, thoughts, privations, and struggles of the industrial poor, combined with its pathos, made it immediately popular. Carlyle and Landor praised it, and Dickens was so enthusiastic that he invited the author to the famous dinner commemorating the publication of the first number of "David Copperfield," at which Carlyle and Thackeray were also present. Moreover, when he started Household Words in 1850 he engaged Mrs. Gaskell to contribute. The first number contained "Lizzie Leigh"; and from this time onward short stories from her pen appeared frequently in both House-

hold Words and the Cornhill Magazine.

In "The Moorland Cottage," published as a Christmas book in 1850, with illustrations by Birket Foster, the critic sees the first suggestion of that delicate humor which found its full expression in "Cranford," which Lord Houghton considered "the purest piece of humoristic description that has been added to British literature since the days of Charles Lamb." Cranford, of course, is none other than the little town of Knutsford, where its author spent her childhood and observed the types of character that she preserved in its pages. The inhabitants recognized themselves. One of them wrote, "Cranford is all about Knutsford; my old mistress, Miss —, is mentioned in it, and our poor cow, she did go to the field in a large flannel waistcoat because she had burned herself in a lime pit."

"Cranford" appeared as a serial in Household Words from 1851 to 1853. Dickens was delighted with the sketches. "Ruth," published in 1853, was Mrs. Gaskell's second important novel. In 1850 Mrs. Gaskell met Charlotte Brontë, and a strong friendship was created. After the latter's death in 1855 Mrs. Gaskell, upon request, wrote her biography.

At the time of Mrs. Gaskell's death, which happened very suddenly at her country home in Hampshire, on November 12, 1865, she was writing "Wives and Daughters," a novel that was running in the Cornhill Magazine; in which Knutsford again appears, but this time veiled as Hollingford. Mrs. Gaskell was laid to rest at Knutsford, in the Brook Street Chapel graveyard, where her husband was buried by her side twenty years later. She left four daughters. Of all her stories "Cranford" is the recognized classic, and its life seems permanently assured.

PREPARED BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE MENTOR ASSOCIATION

ILLUSTRATION FOR THE MENTOR, VOL. 3, No. 5, SERIAL No. 84

COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY THE MENTOR ASSOCIATION, INC.





Y SONNE'S WIFE, ELIZABETH," the pathetic figure of the fast rising flood "On the Coast of Lincolnshire," described in Jean Ingelow's poem, is the subject of one of the intaglio-gravure pictures illustrating "Famous Women Writers of England."

#### JEAN INGELOW

##### Monograph Number Six in The Mentor Reading Course

**J**EAN INGELOW had a singularly serene and happy life. Her father was a prosperous banker, and until his death lived at Boston, Lincolnshire, where she was born in 1820. She described her childhood as "bright and joyous," and her many brothers and sisters as "droll, full of mirth and clever." The Ingelow house was situated on the coast at the mouth of the River Witham and was flanked by two lighthouses.

"We had a lofty nursery," she wrote, "with a bow-window that overlooked the river. My brother and I were constantly wondering at this river. The coming up of the tides and the ships and the jolly gangs of towers ragging them on with a monotonous song, made a daily delight for us. The rushing of the water, the sunshine upon it, and the reflection of the waves on our nursery ceiling supplied hours of talk to us and days of pleasure."

Jean learned to read when three years old, and at an early age began to write poetry. Her first efforts were scribbled on the backs of the folding shutters of her bedroom. She was educated at home by private teachers, superintended by her mother, who was a clever woman of poetic nature.

"We had many pleasures and advantages," says Miss Ingelow. "There was no dullness or gloom about our home, and everything seemed to give occasion for mirth. We had many trips abroad, too; indeed, we spent most winters on the Continent. I made an excursion with a brother, who is an ecclesiastical architect, and in this way I visited every cathedral in France."

Her first work, "A Rhyming Chronicle of Incidents and Feelings," appeared in her thirtieth year, and anonymously. It was praised by Tennyson. Then followed "Allerton and Dreux," a story, in 1851. In 1863 she published her first volume of "Poems," which ran through

several editions and established her popularity. This book had a large sale in the United States. It was followed by "The Story of Doom and Other Poems" in 1867.

Then, for a time, she turned her attention to fiction. A story for children, entitled "Mopsa the Fairy," appeared in 1869, and was succeeded by a novel, "Off the Skelligs" (three rocky islands on the West coast of Ireland), which, published in 1872, attracted attention for its descriptions of scenery. Its sequel, "Fated to Be Free," came out in the next year. "Sarah de Bergener" followed in 1880, and "John Jerome" in 1886.

Her third volume of "Poems," published in 1885, found a waiting audience. In 1898 a complete collection of her verses was published. "When Sparrows Build" (from "Supper at the Mill"), "Sailing Beyond the Seas," "High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire," "Songs of Seven," "Divided," "Winstanley," and "Like a Laverock in the Lift" reveal the poetess at her best. She possessed the quality and temperament of the ballad singer rather than that of the professional author.

Jean Ingelow is not without mannerisms. She often uses unfamiliar and quaint old words for simple objects; her lines frequently halt awkwardly; and her rimes are sometimes far from perfect. However, notwithstanding these blemishes of style, her verse is characterized by sweetness and a delicate underlying tenderness of sentiment.

Miss Ingelow's last years were passed in Kensington, her house standing in spacious grounds with well kept lawns and flower gardens. Here she died on July 20, 1897. Toward the end of her life she wrote little, and only a few hours a day. She spent her winters in the south of Europe. Miss Ingelow was exceedingly charitable, and gave much energy to good works.